Timex Watches Encyclopedia Article

Timex Watches

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Timex Watches

The introduction of the Timex watch in 1956 revolutionized the time-keeping industry. The relatively simple design, with fewer parts than other watches, made the Timex more durable, a feature which led to one of the world's most important advertising campaigns. Capitalizing on the country's growing fascination with television, Timex hired veteran newsman John Cameron Swayze to run an elaborate series of torture tests—live on Steve Allen's popular Sunday night program. Timex watches were smashed by jackhammers, sloshed through dishwashers, and strapped to world class divers taking flops off the cliffs of Acapulco. By 1956, sales of the watch that "takes a lickin' and keeps on tickin" surpassed the five million mark. One of the more famous commercials occurred in 1958, when Swayze strapped a Timex to an outboard motor. When the watch slipped off the propeller and disappeared into the tub of water, Swayze had to promise to try again the following week. Timex decided to end the torture tests campaign in 1977 with a staged failure: an elephant stomped and crushed a watch. "It worked," Swayze quipped to the television audience, "in rehearsal."

Further Reading:

McDermott, Kathleen. *Timex: A Company and its Community, 1854-1998.* Timex Corporation, 1998.